

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BLANTY 01510 170732Z

17L

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 INR-07 NSC-05 PM-04 PRS-01 SCS-03

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R 170545Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8425

INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BLANTYRE 1510

FOR WENDELL B. COOTE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUMJN SREF, PINT, PINS, MI, ZA, MZ

SUBJ: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

REF: BLANTYRE 1509

1. BELOW IS THE TEXT OF LETTER WHICH I PROPOSE BE SENT
TO CONGRESSMAN JAMES J. DELANY SUBJECT TO THE DEPT'S
CLEARANCE. IF THE TEXT IS SATISFACTORY YOU MAY WISH TO PASS
IT TO CONGRESSMAN DELANY AS CABLED REPLY IN VIEW OF THE
PROBABLE DELAY OF TWO WEEKS IN GETTING A POUCHED REPLY TO HIM.
FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT IS CONTAINED IN REFTEL.

"I HAVE RECEIVED YOUR LETTER OF DECEMBER 8, 1975
EXPRESSING INTEREST IN THE SITUATION OF THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
IN MALAWI. THIS SECT HAS BEEN BANNED BY LAW IN MALAWI SINCE
JULY OF 1967. UNDER THE PRESENT PENAL CODE PERSONS CONVICTED
OF BEING ORDINARY MEMBERS MAY BE SENTENCED TO UP TO SEVEN YEARS
IN PRISON AND THOSE CONVICTED OF ACTING IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE MAY
BE SENTENCED TO UP TO FOURTEEN YEARS IN PRISON. IN THE PAST
FEW MONTHS NUMEROUS PRESUMED MEMBERS OF THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND ARE EITHER BEING HELD FOR TRIAL OR HAVE
BEEN TRIED AND IF CONVICTED, IMPRISONED. ADMISSION OF MEMBERSHIP
UNDER QUESTIONING BY THE MAGISTRATE IS NORMALLY CONSIDERED A
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PAGE 02 BLANTY 01510 170732Z

PLEA OF GUILTY. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT MALAWI IS NOT

ALONE AMONG AFRICAN COUNTRIES WITH REGARD TO ITS LEGAL POSITION
CONCERNING THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES.

TROUBLE INVOLVING THIS SECT GOES BACK SOME TEN YEARS
IN MALAWI AND THE RECORD SUGGESTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS
TO DISCOURAGE CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITY HAVE STEADILY
BECOME MORE SEVERE AND DETERMINED. BY ADMISSION IN THE JEHOVAH'S
WITNESSES PUBLICATION "AWAKE" OF DECEMBER 8, 1975, THE SECT HAS
CONTINUED ITS EFFORTS IN MALAWI IN FULLY AWARENESS THAT THIS IS
ILLEGAL UNDER MALAWI LAW.

THE RECENT SITUATION HAS DEVELOPED FOLLOWING THE FORCEABLE
REPATRIATION OF SOME 15,000 TO 20,000 JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES INTO
MALAWI FROM MOZAMBIQUE BY DECISION OF THE FRELIMO GOVERNMENT OF
THE LATTER COUNTRY. MOST OF THESE PEOPLE HAD FLED THERE FROM
MALAWI FOLLOWING DIFFICULTIES IN 1972-73.

ALTHOUGH I HAVE MADE CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO DO SO,
LIMITED AS YOU WILL UNDERSTAND BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT NO UNITED
STATES CITIZENS ARE INVOLVED, I HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY CONFIRMATION
OF THE ALLEGATIONS YOU HAVE RECEIVED CONCERNING ATROCITIES
COMMITTED AGAINST JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. I HAVE BROUGHT TO THE
ATTENTION OF THE MALAWIAN MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS THE FACT
THAT THESE ALLEGATIONS ARE BEING CIRCULATED IN THE UNITED STATES
AND ARE DAMAGING TO MALAWI'S GOOD NAME. UNTIL NOW THE GOVERNMENT
OF MALAWI HAS NOT ANSWERED THESE ALLEGATIONS, AT LEAST INsofar AS
I AM AWARE.

WHATEVER THE FACTS MAY BE, YOU CAN BE SURE THAT WE WILL
SEEK TO FIND WAYS OF FURTHERING A SPIRIT OF COMPASSION AND
HUMANITY IN THIS SITUATION.
STEVENSON

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Message Attributes

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